

**2005 Silicon Boomer Business Summit**  
**White House Conference on Aging Solution Session**

June 21, 2005

Santa Clara University, California

Thank you and good morning Madam Chair and members of this Committee. I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak to you this morning. I greatly appreciate the importance of this Committee's work and know that what I have to say is both relevant and timely.

According to the U.S. Administration on Aging (AOA) our country is facing the most significant population increase amongst the aging population. The annual study conducted by the AOA predicts that by the year 2030 approximately 70 million individuals will be over the age of 65. This is well over twice the size of the older adult population in 2000.

California's 65 and over population will grow from 3.7 million in 2000 to 8.9 million in 2030 – also more than doubling in size (CA Department of Finance).

These statistics include those individuals born between 1946 and 1964 --- the Baby Boomer generation.

Older Americans are our only *increasing* natural resource. It is important that America harness the energy of this massive boomer generation to help meet the pressing needs of our communities as they struggle to survive in this increasingly challenging world. The Baby Boomer Generation enters into retirement armed with a wealth of experience, knowledge, and resources that can benefit our society.

The impending growth in our aging population creates a unique potential for increased civic engagement and volunteerism. Active adults can become the foundation of civic engagement; transforming lives and revitalizing communities by helping local organizations achieve their missions and strategic goals.

Volunteering and community service by people of all ages and backgrounds can make a huge difference for those in need and also for the volunteers themselves. As a result organizations that foster volunteering and civic engagement are a key to addressing a wide range of pressing social issues.

Authorized by the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 and administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the three programs of the Senior Corps – Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program – **are** the “Boomer Corps”. They are positioned right now to cost-effectively engage baby boomers in volunteer service that will both meet their emotional needs as well as provide local communities with an army of healthy, committed, and wise volunteers who will meet vitally important local needs. Together, the 1,330 Senior Corps programs nationwide field well over

one-half million volunteers who annually give 120 million hours of service to over 80,000 sites in communities across the country; 5,600 (7%) of these community sites are affiliated with faith-based organizations. The average federal cost of a Senior Corps volunteer's service is \$1.76 per hour. The three Senior Corps programs have built extensive support for their programs in local communities over the last 40 years, generating \$ .60 in nonfederal cash and in-kind donations for every \$1.00 of federal funds invested. RSVP alone matches its current federal budget of \$56.1 million with \$55.6 million in non-federal support.

The three Senior Corps programs are already firmly entrenched in the service delivery fabric of their communities. They have extensive experience in documenting, tracking and reporting volunteer accomplishments and in placing volunteers at sites and in activities that will have the highest impact on the individuals and communities being served. The Senior Corps programs are well-known and respected in their communities and have established administrative structures that can effectively engage large numbers of older adults in service as well as be accountable for providing meaningful service opportunities with excellent and cost effective use of federal and local funds.

The Corporation for National and Community Service has long viewed older adults, not as a social cost, but as an underused asset, not just as consumers of social resources, but also as untapped human capital. Using this resource to the fullest advantage will become critically important to our Nation as the 77 million members of the baby boomer generation reach retirement age and begin to look to spend the "final third" of their lives in ways that are fulfilling, productive and meaningful – not only for ourselves and our families, but also for our communities and our country.

Baby boomers are different in many ways from their parents' generation, and from other generations before them. First, boomers are interested in achieving balance and flexibility in their work, leisure and volunteer time, even in their later years. Not content to use retirement as a time to relax, baby boomers are interested in doing something real and substantial with their time – and in achieving meaningful and tangible results. Boomers want to be able to choose the time, duration and method of service within broad guidelines. Baby boomers want to be as free as possible of red tape, regulations and bureaucratic barriers.

Baby boomers, who came of age in a period of great social idealism, indicate a need to continue to effect social change. Many boomers were in their formative years when President Kennedy issued his famous call to "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." That message still resonates very strongly among a wide cross-section of baby boomers.

While volunteering among older adults is an important element of ensuring the well being of our communities, it has also been shown to contribute to the physical and emotional health and well being of the volunteers themselves. Several research studies indicate that older people who volunteer have fewer medical problems. Specifically, volunteer activity has been shown to decrease incidences of heart disease, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It also has been shown to increase the cognitive skills of older adults because it protects their memory as they age.

The business community can play an extremely important role in efforts to engage baby boomers in meeting local needs, both through financial support to nonprofit organizations and by creating flexible employment policies. Good citizenship, as you know, is one of the very highest priorities of the Bush Administration. Since his Inauguration in 2001, the President has encouraged us to be “citizens” not “spectators.” The concept of good citizenship, however, applies not only to individuals, but to businesses as well.

Business can be a powerful force for good in this area. For example, in creating flexible employment policies, businesses can make it easy for their employees, especially the aging boomers, to volunteer by offering incentives such as paid leave for volunteerism, job sharing and other flexible situations. They can give their employees special training, such as tutoring and mentoring, that increases their value as volunteers. They can also “loan” an executive to a struggling community or faith-based organization, and that executive can help it set up sound administrative, financial and technological systems. Loaning employee leaders to non-profit agencies for specific capacity building purposes creates a win - win situation for everyone with an interest in the partnership. Leadership from the business community can inspire retirees to engage in community service. In addition, they can challenge and inspire other companies to do the same.

The cost of properly supporting volunteers with supervision, training, recognition and incentives are a very real expense for non-profit organizations and they cannot rely entirely on government funds to pay for these costs. Non-profit agencies would welcome the support of local businesses to help them fund their volunteer management efforts

These actions on the part of business are not just altruistic expressions that are good for the Nation, but they also serve as sound business practices. Companies that have volunteer time policies experience increases in employee productivity and morale, stronger employee retention and stronger ties to the communities in which they operate. This has the added benefit of deepening consumer and shareholder relations. Businesses may also find that they can reduce medical costs for retirees by finding ways to connect them with corporate service projects and other volunteer opportunities.

All of this adds up to a positive impact on a company’s bottom line. In short, good corporate citizenship is both the right thing to do and it is a smart business practice.

Public policies reflect what we, as a society, value. National Service is critical to the future health and well being of our Nation, and we need to do what we can to encourage it. I believe that because of its experience, The Corporation for National and Community Service can be strong leader and a strong support network in ensuring that volunteer service is attractive and accessible for all people, especially for those who are approaching their later years.

Our Nation doesn’t think twice about encouraging people to make financial plans for their later years. Businesses can include retirement planning programs that not only provide information on how to best handle their retiree’s retirement funds, but also include how to find meaningful volunteer opportunities in the community and that highlight the health benefits that come from voluntary community service. Businesses can provide “Re-Careering” programs for employees

who are interested in finding future employment in the non-profit sector and want to continue to work in a full or part-time position. “Re-Careering gives the employee the opportunity to either share their life skills or learn new skills to use in their retirement job – either in community service or in a paid position.

Similarly, we must encourage our older Americans to plan their time and give their energies and experience for causes that they care about in their communities. Making the fullest use of resources, and especially the unique qualities of the 77 million members of the baby boomer generation, will help to meet a variety of local needs. What’s more, making full use of our baby boomers will help ensure that older adults are viewed – and that they view themselves- as valuable community assets who can contribute to society throughout their lives.

The National Associations for RSVP, SCP and FGP Directors propose that the White House Conference on Aging include in the policy recommendations that emerge from the 2005 Conference a recommendation that will use the three premier, long-standing, respected, experienced, and cost-effective programs of the Senior Corps to engage baby boomers in volunteer service that will effectively meet boomers’ needs as well as address the challenges our communities face in providing services to their citizens.

Thank You.

Testimony Respectfully Presented by:

Deborah Owdom  
Project Director, RSVP of San Mateo County  
Sect., National Association of RSVP Directors  
Delegate, 2005 WHCoA (Representing Congressman Tom Lantos)  
Mills Peninsula Health Center  
100 S. San Mateo Drive  
San Mateo, CA 94401  
(650) 696-4407  
FAX (650) 696-4179



## 2005 WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE on AGING

**Social Engagement:** Preserve and enhance the older adult population's integral position in and connection to the community at large

**Resolution \_\_\_\_\_ Strategies for changing attitudes towards aging  
Increasing opportunities for volunteerism and other forms  
of civic engagement**

1. **WHEREAS** America now boasts the largest, best-educated, and most vigorous population of older adults in our nation's history who are now living longer after retirement;
2. **WHEREAS** an elder population explosion is now upon us as 77 million baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 reach retirement age;
3. **WHEREAS** Baby Boomers and current older Americans express the desire to age positively, stay mentally and physically healthy, and be independent, vital resources to their communities, not dependant *consumers* of services after retirement;
4. **WHEREAS** typical Baby Boomers say they will fill their later years with a balance between full or part time work, travel, hobbies, and time with family, they also indicate a need to continue the commitment to effecting social change they began in the 1960's by giving back to their communities and volunteering to further causes that are truly meaningful and will change the world and make it a better place for future generations.;
5. **WHEREAS** many Americans of retirement age are interested in daily, long-term volunteering, Baby Boomers indicate that they are attracted by volunteer programs and activities that focus on time-limited, episodic and project-based service that they can seamlessly weave into the rest of their busy lives;
6. **WHEREAS** the country is in desperate need of help to address growing needs in education, health care, social services, public safety, the environment, and other fundamental areas of American life; and
7. **WHEREAS** adults of retirement age are often overlooked as a valuable resource for addressing social issues in their communities; and
8. **WHEREAS** 40 – 44 % of Americans 55 years of age and older are already actively involved in volunteer activities and 85% of people over age 55 report that they will volunteer if asked, but there are relatively few mechanisms that exist to assist them in fulfilling their potential in service activities that are meaningful;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the 2005 White House Conference on Aging to support activities that:**

1. Charge the Corporation for National and Community Service to take a leadership role in engaging Baby Boomers in service by recruiting and enrolling in its programs 1 million people of retirement age by the year 2010;
2. Reauthorize the National and Community Service Trust Act as a means of reaffirming, expanding, revamping, and recruiting more older adults and Baby Boomers into the three largest senior volunteer programs in the nation: the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the RSVP Program;
3. Encourage and enable national, state and local organizations that currently provide volunteer and paid work opportunities for people of retirement age from all economic backgrounds to attract Baby Boomers by expanding and re-aligning their portfolios to include more informal, time-limited, episodic and project-based volunteer service opportunities as well as full-time, part-time, and episodic paid work opportunities;
4. Facilitate collaboration at the national, state and local levels of organizations involving older adult volunteers and paid workers, such as the Area Agencies on Aging, Volunteer Action Centers (VACs), National Council on Aging (NCOA) programs and AARP, especially in regard to intergenerational involvement and long term care;
5. Develop Federal, state, local, and private sector partnerships that provide additional resources to support elder volunteers as a resource;
6. Combat ageism by encouraging the Federal Government to provide education and public awareness that emphasizes elders as givers of services instead of consumers of services, that publicizes the positive contributions older adults make to their communities every day, and that focuses on the value of volunteering for people's well-being and esteem;
7. Encourage the training of volunteers by qualified public, private and non-profit entities to enhance the effectiveness of elder volunteers; and
8. Encourage research to identify and action to fill gaps between volunteer participation and productive potentials of people as they reach retirement age.

***Other organizations that wish to add their endorsement should contact one of the following:***

National Association of Foster Grandparent Program Directors  
Brenda Lax, President (816) 784-4519

National Association of Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Directors  
Melodye Kleinman, President (310) 394-9871, ext. 450

National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors  
Larry Imhoff, President (361) 880-3147

***The following organizations have endorsed this proposed resolution***

Generations United

Pamela Pressley, Public Policy Coordinator (202) 289-4502

Innovations in Civic Participation

Susan E. Stroud, Executive Director (202) 775-0290

Youth Volunteer Corps of America

David Battey, President (913) 432-9822

California Association of Senior Service Corps Directors

Tom Reeve, Secretary (831) 475-0816, ext. 16

Colorado State NSSC Directors Association

Tom Rapp, President (303) 426-4408, ext. 208

Indiana Association of Senior Corps Directors

Carl Sperzel, President (812) 948-1815

Louisiana State NSSC Directors Association

Melvin, E. Hale, President (225) 765-8765

Michigan Association of Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Programs

Mary Ann Mooradian, Secretary (989) 772-0748

Minnesota Senior Corps Directors Association

Bonnie Ebnet, President (218) 748-7328

Southern Association of RSVP Directors (10 states)

Betty M. Ruth, President (256) 232-7207

Tennessee Association of Senior Volunteer Directors, Inc.

Rebecca Hare, Board Chair (865) 524-2786

Utah State Senior Service Corps Directors Association

Rebecca Mason, President (435) 637-9118